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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KUWAIT 002496

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP, SA/INS, DRL/PHD, DRL/ILA, G/TIP
STATE FOR CA/OCS/ACS/NESA, M/P FOR JAY ANANIA

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TAGS: [ELAB](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ETRD](#) [EAID](#) [KU](#) [IZ](#) [IN](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ TRAVEL BAN: US MILITARY PRESSES INDIA AND
PHILIPPINES TO EXEMPT NATIONALS UNDER MILITARY ESCORT

REF: A. STATE 169976

[B](#). KUWAIT 2425

[C](#). KUWAIT 2006

[D](#). KUWAIT 1834

[E](#). KUWAIT 1835

[F](#). KUWAIT 1683

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Matthew Tueller, Reason 1.4(b)

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY. The Embassy hosted an August 5 meeting between representatives of the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) and representatives from the Indian and Philippines Embassies concerning the travel ban that both India and the Philippines have imposed, prohibiting their nationals from entering Iraq (Ref B). Military supply convoys are now stacking up at the Kuwait-Iraq border, with the main transportation contractor, PWC, estimating that only a few days' supply of food and water remain in Iraq. CFLCC BG Jack Stultz emphasized that the military treats drivers of all nations as if they were American soldiers, offering the same level of protection and quality of life provisions. He stressed that support convoys entering Iraq through the military crossing are always under military control, and requested that the Governments of India and the Philippines allow their nationals traveling under US military escort to enter Iraq through the coalition crossing. The Indians said that they were primarily concerned with the kidnapping of Indian nationals. The Philippine Labor Attache said that he had already prepared a memo for his government seeking relief from the ban, and said that the Philippines government is amenable. The GOK says it would permit Indians and Filipinos to enter Iraq through the military border crossing if so instructed by Manila and New Delhi. END SUMMARY.

[2](#). (SBU) On August 5, the Embassy hosted a meeting between representatives of the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC), led by Brigadier Generals Jack Stultz and William Johnson, and representatives from the Indian and Philippines Embassies concerning the travel ban that both India and the Philippines have imposed, prohibiting their nationals from entering Iraq (Ref B). As a result of the ban, US military supply convoy operations -- which are heavily dependent on Filipino and Indian drivers -- have once again been halted, with reports of almost 1,000 trucks stopped at the Kuwait-Iraq border. Since 75 percent of all supply convoys enter Iraq from Kuwait, any disruption has serious consequences (Note. As of August 5, a representative from the main transportation contractor, PWC, estimated that only a six day supply of PWC-delivered food and water remained in Iraq. End Note.). CFLCC hoped that by providing more information on security provisions made for foreign national truckers in US military-escorted convoys, the Indians and Filipinos could be persuaded to exempt their nationals who are working for US military contractors from the travel ban.

[3](#). (SBU) BG Stultz thanked the Indian and Filipino diplomats for attending and, noting the centrality of Indian and Filipino drivers to US operations in Iraq, expressed his deep concern over the current ban prohibiting their nationals from entering Iraq. BG Stultz emphasized that the military treats drivers of all nations as if they were American soldiers, offering the same level of protection and providing access to dining, sleeping and truck maintenance facilities at convoy support centers along the supply route. He offered a detailed description of the various convoy operations currently crossing the Kuwait-Iraq border through the coalition crossing point, as well as the security measures that the military undertakes to protect them. These convoys are always, he stressed, under military control.

[4](#). (SBU) The Indians, who asked if any statistics were available on the number of convoys that had come under attack, said that they were primarily concerned with the kidnapping of Indian nationals. They did concede, though, that they did not have any information to suggest that the hostages were taken from military convoys. BG Stultz acknowledged that there are many non-military contractors operating in Iraq over whom the military has no control and whose drivers, security cannot be guaranteed. Significantly, however, BG Stultz specified that no hostages have been taken from a military convoy since April 9 (at that

time, one US soldier and one foreign national driver were abducted; the soldier is still missing, but the foreign national driver escaped). Because the military could provide sufficient security for drivers traveling with military escort, he continued, the military was requesting that the Government of India and the Philippines grant an exemption to their travel ban and allow their nationals traveling under US military escort to enter Iraq through the coalition crossing.

15. (C) The Indians said that they would relay the request to New Delhi, but cautioned that during the last travel ban, the Kuwaitis were adamant that either all Indians would be permitted to cross, or none would be allowed to enter Iraq. EconCouns clarified that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had expressed a willingness to apply the ban selectively, imposing it only at the civilian crossing but allowing Indian and Filipino drivers to pass at the military crossing. The Indians then made another appeal for the military to provide death benefits to the families of ten Indian drivers killed in Iraq (Refs C and E), saying that "these small things help us in talking to our government." BG Stultz noted that there are 3500 contractors working in Iraq, many of whom are not affiliated with the US military, and thus the military needed to investigate to determine if these individuals were working for a military contractor/subcontractor.

16. (SBU) Philippine Labor Attache Angelo Jimenez, who said that the availability of first aid for Filipino drivers was a major concern, requested a map showing all of the convoy support centers in Iraq and pressed the military representatives for estimates of how long drivers would need to wait for medical treatment if they came under attack. According to Jimenez, the Philippines Embassy had received reports of non-military casualties not receiving treatment. BG Stultz urged Jimenez to notify him immediately if he received any such reports.

17. (C) Jimenez said that he had already prepared a memo for his government seeking relief from the ban. According to him, the Philippines government is amenable because they are being pressured by Filipinos who need the jobs. (Note. In a follow-up telephone conversation with EconOff on August 7, Jimenez said that he already sent one memo and is preparing a second, more detailed report. He does not expect to have feedback from Manila until Monday, August 9. End Note). He emphasized, however, that there needed to be a very clear method of differentiation between those nationals working with military protection, and those working for non-military contractors. CFLCC staff again stressed that the only individuals who may use the coalition border crossing are those under military escort; non-military contractors must use the civilian crossing at Al-Abdaly. Therefore, the military was seeking an exemption for foreign national drivers seeking to cross the Kuwait-Iraq border at the coalition border crossing only. Jimenez asked if there were similar control points at the Jordanian and Turkish borders that would separate military from civilian traffic; BG Stultz confirmed that there were. Finally, Jimenez requested that the military provide him with a point of contact with whom his embassy could work in case the ban was relaxed and there were problems with implementation. The military agreed to identify a point of contact in the Embassy, who would then coordinate with the operations center at Camp Arifjan.

18. (SBU) COMMENT. While both the Indians and the Filipinos promised to transmit BG Stultz's assurances to their respective capitals, the Filipino attache seemed more receptive to CFLCC's message than the Indians. The Indians' more guarded response may be due, in part, to the fact that not all of the problems that led them to impose their May/June travel ban have been addressed (most notably, the lack of death benefits for Indians killed in Iraq; refs C and E). CFLCC and the Embassy are working together to ensure that the Indians' outstanding concerns are adequately addressed. END COMMENT.

TUELLER